

**The Finishing Touch:
Tips for Facilitating Question and Answer Sessions**

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After working hard to create a strong speech and practicing diligently to ensure the success of your presentation, you will one want to consider one more vital aspect of your speaking engagement—the question and answer session. The question and answer session allows for audience interaction and immediate feedback, so it is essential that you are prepared to respond to questions and to facilitate the session as competently and smoothly as possible.

The following tips will help you prepare for and facilitate an effective question and answer session:

- Anticipate likely questions and formulate possible responses before you present.
- When rehearsing your speech, practice your question and answer session, too, so that you will have practice articulating responses to likely questions.
- Establish a time limit and inform your audience of the length when you begin the question and answer session. Be firm about cutting off questions when the predetermined time is up.
- Restate each question clearly. This helps you clarify the question, ensures that the entire audience hears the question, and gives you a moment to consider your response.
- Direct your response to the entire audience to maintain everybody's attention.
- Be brief. Give simple answers to simple questions. When faced with a complicated or unwieldy question, answer concisely and then offer to meet the questioner later for further discussion.
- Be straightforward. If you do not know the answer to a particular question, refer the question to somebody else or offer to get back to the questioner with an answer.
- Whenever possible, refer to your speech as you respond to the question. This reinforces the content of your speech and helps maintain the focus of the question and answer session.
- Do not allow one person to dominate the question and answer session. Try to maintain momentum to sustain the interest of your audience, which can easily be lost if only one audience member is participating.

- Conclude smartly. Prepare a concluding statement to indicate the end of the question and answer session and to reinforce the main points of your presentation.